

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12

DPW-01 AID-20 OMB-01 RSR-01 /103 W

----- 076493

R 311125 Z MAR 73 ZDK
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9446
INFO USDEL JEC PARIS
AMCONSUL BIEN HOA
AMCONSUL DANANG
AMCONSUL NHA TRANG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 5325

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI PINT VS

SUBJECT: SITREP FOR MARCH 31, 1973

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION SAIGON FROM CAN THO MAR 31
REPEATED FOR YOUR INFO

QUOTE CAN THO 0111

1. SUMMARY: ON THE LAST DAY OF THE JMC' S LIFE, MILITARY ACTIVITY
IN THE DELTA CONTINUED TO BE RELATIVELY HEAVY. UNDER ICCS
SUPERVISION THE AMERICAN, DRV AND PRG DELEGATIONS TO REGIONS VI
AND VII DEPARTED MARCH 30 AND 31 FOR SAIGON. THE VC/ NVA OFFENSIVE
AGAINST NORTHERN KIEN PHONG HAS TEMPORARILY SUBSIDED AFTER SEVERAL
SUCCESSES. REPORTS OF GVN CORRUPTION IN THE POST- CEASEFIRE PERIOD
ARE COMMON THROUGHOUT THE DELTA. END SUMMARY.

2. SECURITY SITUATION: THE PAGE OF MILITARY ACTIVITY IN MR IV
REMAINS UNCHANGED. FIFTY- THREE INCIDENTS OCCURRED ON MARCH 30;
THE GREAT MAJORITY WERE LARGELY INEFFECTIVE ATTACKS BY FIRE
RVNAF CASUALTIES REMAINED ALMOST THE SAME AS THE AVERAGE OF PAST
WEEKS (OVER 15 KIA AND ABOUT 100 WIA A DAY). MR IV REPORTED
VC/ NVA CASUALTIES DECLINED ON MARCH 30 TO A LOW ELEVEN. THE
MAJORITY OF INCIDENTS WERE CONCENTRATED IN NORTHERN KIEN PHONG
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AND CHUONG THIEN. DINH TUONG CONTINUES TO BE QUIET, CONFIRMING ARVN SPECULATION THAT VC/ NVA MAIN FORCES ARE STANDING DOWN TEMPORARILY FOR RESUPPLY.

3. ICCS- JMC : (A) REGION VII ICCS HAD CONSIDERED 60 GVN INVESTIGATION REQUESTS OUT OF 71 SUBMITTED AS OF MARCH 31. THIRTY WERE TURNED DOWN, MOST BECAUSE THE INCIDENT SITE WAS INSECURE. OTHERS WERE REJECTED BECAUSE THERE WAS NO SUBSTANTIVE EVIDENCE ON WHICH TO BASE FINDINGS OR BECAUSE THE COMPLAINT HAD BEEN SUBMITTED TOO LONG AFTER THE VIOLATION. EIGHT REPORTS HAVE GONE FROM REGION TO SAIGON AND SIX MORE WILL BE FORWARDED NEXT WEEK. OF THE 60 VIOLATIONS, 36 WERE SHELLINGS OF MORE OR LESS CIVILIAN AREAS, 13 WERE ATTACKS ON OUTPOSTS AND THE REMAINDER AN ASSORTMENT OF MININGS, GRENADES, ETC.

(B) THE DRV/ FPJMC DELEGATION TO REGION VII LEFT MY THO FOR SAIGON BY BUS MARCH 30. THE PRG DELEGATION WILL FOLLOW MARCH 31, ALSO BY BUS. THE REMAINING AMERICAN MILITARY IN THE SOUTHERN DELTA, THE REGION VII JMC CONTINGENT, BROUGHT DOWN THE FLAG AND LEFT CAN THO FOR SAIGON EARLY MARCH 31. THE ICCS WAS ON HAND FOR ALL DEPARTURES.

4. COMMUNIST ACTIVITY: (A) MILITARY. THE VC/ NVA OFFENSIVE AGAINST HONG NGU AND CAI CAI IN NORTHERN KIEN PHONG IS SLOWING DOWN SLIGHTLY AFTER TEN DAYS OF HEAVY FIGHTING. ACCORDING TO SOURCES IN CHAU DOC SECTOR, IN THE FIRST WEEK OF COMBAT, THE VC/ NVA SCORED SEVERAL IMPRESSIVE SUCCESSES. A BATTALION AND A RECONNAISSANCE COMPANY OF THE 14 TH REGIMENT, 9 TH ARVN DIVISION WERE MAULED IN THE INITIAL ATTACKS AND TWO RF OUTPOSTS WERE OVERRUN OR ABANDONED. RVNAF HAS RETAKEN NEITHER POSITION.

(B) INCIDENTS HAVE INCREASED OVER THE LAST WEEK IN SOUTHERN KIEN GIANG PROVINCE. THERE ARE TWO POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS. MR-4/ G-2 BELIEVES INFILTRATION OF SUPPLIES AND POSSIBLY PERSONNEL FROM CAMBODIA THROUGH KIEN GIANG TO THE U MINH FOREST IS INCREASING AND VC/ NVA FORCES ARE PUSHING BACK RVNAF POSITIONS TO INCREASE THE SECURITY OF THEIR I- C SUPPLY ROUTE. BASED ON LOCAL INTELLIGENCE ONLY, KIEN GIANG SECTOR OFFICERS ARE UNABLE TO CONFIRM INFILTRATION IS INCREASING. ALTERNATIVELY, THE ATTACKS MAY BE FURTHER MOVES BY VC MR III TO INCREASE THE SIZE OF ITS U MINH LIBERATED AREA. WHICHEVER EXPLANATION IS CORRECT, KIEN GIANG SECTOR FORCES HAVE SUFFERED THEIR HEAVIEST CASUALTIES SINCE TET. THE MOST SEVERE INCIDENT OCCURRED ON MARCH 29 WHEN A TWO PLATOON PF FORCE IN KIEN AN DISTRICT WAS AMBUSHED AND VIRTUALLY DESTROYED. (C) VINH BINH SECTOR OFFICERS REPORT THAT THE LARGE NUMBERS OF MEN PICKED UP BY THE VIET CONG IN VINH BINH RECENTLY (CAN CONFIDENTIAL

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THO 0084) ARE VERY YOUNG. ALL WERE BELOW THE GVN DRAFT AGE AND

SOME WERE AS YOUNG AS 12. THE MAJORITY CAME FROM VINH BINH'S SOUTHERNMOST DISTRICT OF LONG TOAN. MANY JOINED THE VC VOLUNTARILY. IN THE SAME DISTRICT, THE VC ARE CONDUCTING A MAJOR PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN, PICKING UP LOCAL RESIDENTS AND TAKING THEM FOR THREE- DAY SESSIONS IN THE MANGROVE SWAMPS. ACCORDING TO CATHOLIC PRIESTS IN THE AREA, ALMOST 50 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION OF LONG TOAN VILLAGE, OR SEVERAL HUNDRED INHABITANTS, HAVE RECEIVED THIS FORM OF POST- CEASEFIRE VC INDOCTRINATION. LONG TOAN GVN FORCES ARE NOT RREACTING TO VC MOVES. THE PRIESTS CONCLUDE THAT UNLESS THE GVN INTERRUPTS VC ACTIVITIES AND MAKES A MAJOR EFFORT TO DEMONSTRATE ITS CONTROL, THE DISTRICT WOULD VOTE COMMUNIST IN AN ELECTION. IN THIS AREA OF LONG AND DEEP VC INDLUENCE, THE IRIESTS' ASSESSMENT COMES AS NO SURPRISE.

5. GVN ACTIVITY: REPORTS OF CORRUPTION DURING THE POST- CEASEFIRE PERIOD ARE COMMON THROUGHOUT THE DELTA. IN VINH LONG, OUR VICE CONSUL REPORTS CORRUPTION HAS NOT SUBSIDED DESPITE AN INTENSIVE PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN AGAINST IT. INFORMED CITIZENS NOTE OFFICIALS ARE ALIGHTLY MORE SECRETIVE ABOUT ACCEPTING BRIBES BUT UNTIL DECISIVE AND HIGH VISIBLE ACTION IS TAKEN IN SAIGON, LOCAL OFFICIALS WILL CONTINUE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THEIR POSITIONS. THE NEW DISTIRCT CHIEF IN TRA ON DISTRICT IS SAID TO HAVE CALLED A MEETING OF CIVIL SERVANTS AND VILLAGE OFFICIALS AND TOLD EACH TO PAY \$50,000 VN TO HELP HIM MAKE PAYMENTS TO UNDISCLOSED HIGHER OFFICIALS. HE HAS ALSO AUTHORIZED A LOCAL VIETNAMESE CONTRACTOR TO OPEN A GAMBLING DEN WHICH PROVIDES THE DISTRICT CHIEF \$400,000 VN IN MONTHLY REVENUES. FAMILY ACQUAINTANCES IN THE DISTRICT CHIEF'S NATIVE TOWN OF SADEC SAY WITH A SMILE THAT THEIR MAJOR " EATS A GREAT DEAL" SINCE HIS TRA ON ASSIGNMENT. SIGNED BARNES UNQUOTE BENNETT

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